

Recognizing Main Idea and Details

Supporting Details: Examples

Musical instruments come in a great variety of shapes. The trombone is the only instrument with a long slide that the player moves back and forth to play different pitches. Flutes and piccolos have perfectly straight tubes; all other wind instruments have tubes that taper and end in bell shapes. The French horn is distinctive for its curved, curled shape and its bell that points backward.

The first sentence, the **topic sentence**, states the paragraph's **main idea**.

Supporting details give **examples** of different shapes of instruments.

Supporting Details: Sensory Details

Carnations come in a variety of lovely shades of pink, red, orange, and yellow. Their ruffled petals give them a pert and pretty shape. Their fresh, clean scent lasts a long time and gives a pleasant aroma to an entire room. Carnations are strong and hardy and will last a long time in water after they are picked. They do not droop, but stand straight and tall on their dark-green stems. All these qualities make carnations perfect flowers for vases.

The **topic** is carnations. Most of the details tell how these flowers look and smell (**sensory details**). The topic sentence, which summarizes the details, comes at the end of the paragraph.

Supporting Details: Facts and Statistics

Outfielder Babe Ruth was the greatest baseball player of them all. Ruth routinely hit more than 50 home runs per season, in an era when entire teams did not hit that many. Ruth hit a home run roughly once every 12 times he came up to bat. Ruth's record of 60 home runs in 1927 stood for more than 30 years. Ruth was also an outstanding left-handed pitcher, something no present-day outfielder can claim!

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph.

This paragraph uses **facts and statistics** to support the main idea.

Supporting Details: Reasons

Yellow is the best color to paint a room with few windows, or with windows that admit little sunlight. Yellow is a light color, so it will make the room seem larger and will relieve the darkness. Yellow paint will also make it seem as if the sun is always shining, even on a rainy day. Finally, yellow will add warmth to the room, while white paint on the walls will only make it look dead.

The topic sentence states the writer's opinion about yellow paint on the walls. The supporting details give **reasons** that explain why the opinion is valid.